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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /074 W
----------002191 231807Z /41
P R 231751Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3465
SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
INFO USMISSION USNATO
USCINCEUR
HQ 3AF RAF MILDENHALL
USNMR SHAPE
CINCUSAFE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 03020

CINCUSAFE ALSO FOR POLAD;DOD FOR ISA, PA; AND CSAF/OI

E. O. 11652:X-GDS-1
TAGS: NATO, MPOL, UK, MILI
SUBJECT: RAF GREENHAM COMMON

SUMMARY: EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED LETTER FROM UK MOD (HOLTON, HEAD OF DS-8) LISTING FURTHER DETAILED QUESTION ON US PROPOSAL TO REACTIVATE RAF GREENHAM COMMON. LETTER (FULL TEXT BELOW) STATES OPERATIONAL CASE FOR DEPLOYMENT TO EUROPE IS CLEARLY ESTABLISHED AND ACCEPTED BUT ASKS (AMONG OTHER THINGS) WHETHER US HAS CONSIDERED OTHER UK LOCATIONS, SUCH AS FAIRFORD, AND IF SO, REASONS FOR OUR REJECTION. LETTER ALSO ASKS SERIES OF QUESTION RELATED TO ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS, STRESSING CIVILIAN GROWTH IN GREENHAM COMMON AREA SINCE DEACTIVATION. HOLTON NOTES HMG NEEDS THIS INFORMATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO PREPARE FOR LOCAL PLANNING INQUIRY SCHEDULED TO COMMENCE APRIL 5.
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2. ACTION REQUESTED: BASIS FOR REPLY TO QUESTIONS IN MOD LETTER, IF POSSIBLE (AS MOD REQUESTS) AS ANSWERS BECOME AVAILABLE RATHER THAN AWAITING PROCESSING OF ENTIRE PACKAGE.

3. BEGIN TEXT: REACTIVATION OF GREENHAM COMMON

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(1) IN YOUR LETTER OF 19 JANUARY TO JOHN WILBERFORCE
YOU CONVEYED THE US GOVERNMENT'S REQUEST TO ACTIVATE
RAF GREENHAM COMMON FOR THE BASING OF UP TO 15 KC135
TANKER AIRCRAFT. THIS WAS FORWARDED TO ME BY THE
FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE, AND AS YOU KNOW WE HAVE
BEEN URGENTLY EXAMINING IT WITHIN THE MOD. YOU HAVE NOW
KINDLY SENT FURTHER INFORMATION WITH YOUR LETTER OF
15 FEBRUARY.
(2) THE OPERATIONAL CASE FOR THE DEPLOYMENT TO EUROPE I
CLEARLY ESTABLISHED AND ACCEPTED. BUT OUR FIRST EXAMINA
TION WHICH IS NOW COMPLETE HAS THROWN UP A SERIES OF
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS. MANY OF THESE RELATE TO EN-
VIRONMENTAL ISSUES SINCE, AS YOU KNOW, THE BASE IS CLOSE
TO THE MARKET TOWN OF NEWBURY, IT HAS NOT BEEN USED OTHE
THAN ON A STAND-BY BASIS FOR MANY YEARS AND IN THE
MEANTIME THERE HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE CIVIL BUILDING DEVELOP-
MENT PARTICULARLY BEYOND THE WESTERN END OF THE RUNWAY
AND ROUND THE TOWN OF THATCHAM. FOR EXAMPLE YOU WILL SEE
FROM THE ENCLOSED MAP THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SCHOOLS
NOT FAR FROM THE AIRFIELD AND THE AREA WITHIN THE DOTTED
LINE SOUTH OF THE RAILWAY IS NOW MORE OR LESS COVERED BY
HOUSING.

(3) LAND SUITABLE FOR BUILDING IS SCARCE IN THE LOCALITY
AND WE KNOW THAT THE PROPOSED WEST BERKSHIRE STRUCTURE
PLAN PROVIDED FOR MORE BUILDING IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY
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OF THE BASE. IT IS THEREFORE INEVITABLE THAT ENVIRON-
MENTAL ISSUES WILL PLAY A SIGNIFICANT PART IN THE
CONSIDERATION OF THIS APPLICATION.

(4) THE FIRST REQUEST THEREFORE IS THAT YOU SHOULD LET
ME KNOW MORE ABOUT THE REASONS FOR YOUR CHOICE OF GREEN-
HAM COMMON IN PREFERENCE TO ANY OTHER LOCATION IN ENGLAND
IN VIEW OF THE STEADY GROWTH OF THE NEARBY TOWN, THE
CENTRE OF WHICH IS ABOUT 1-1/2 MILES FROM THE END OF THE
RUNWAY. IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF YOU COULD INCLUDE A
REFERENCE TO OTHER POSSIBLE LOCATIONS WHICH WILL NO DOUBT
HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED AND REJECTED. IN PARTICULAR
FAIRFORD HAS FEATURED IN THE PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF YOUR
APPLICATION AND WE WOULD NEED TO KNOW THE CASE AGAINST
IT FOR THIS PURPOSE.

(5) SECONDLY THERE ARE SOME MINOR OPERATIONAL CONSIDERA-
TIONS:

(A) WHAT WOULD BE THE PLANNED WARTIME ROLE OF GREENHAM
COMMON? WILL IT INVOLVE PEACETIME DEPLOYMENTS? CAN
YOU CONFIRM OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE F111 AIRCRAFT

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PREVIOUSLY PLANNED TO DEPLOY THERE IN WAR WOULD NO LONGER
DO SO AND THAT THE PROPOSED AIRCRAFT SHELTERS WILL IN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 03020

CONSEQUENCE NOT BE NEEDED?

(B) DOES THE PLAN TO INTRODUCE A-10S AT BENTWATERS/
WOODBRIDGE IN PLACE OF PHANTOMS ALTER THE FIGURE O 78
IN SUB-PARA (C) OF YOUR LETTER OF 19 JANUARY. (COMMENT:
PARA 3 OF STATE 14100 REFERS HERE AND FOLLOWING SUB-
PARA. END COMMENT.)

(C) WHAT IS MEANT BY "TEMPORARY" IN LINE 1 OF SUB-PARA
(C) WHICH PRESUMABLY REFERS INTER ALIA TO THE KC135S
BASED AT MILDENHALL? WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
THE TASKS OF THE PROPOSED GREENHAM COMMON TANKERS AND
THOSE AT MILDENHALL?

(D) IF GREENHAM COMMON IS REACTIVATED WILL ANOTHER
STAND-BY BASE BE NEEDED?

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(E) IS ANY LATER (IE POST KC135) DEVELOPMENT ENVISAGED FOR GREENHAM COMMON?

(6) THIRDLY THE CONCENTRATION OF UNIQUE NUCLEAR DEFENCE FACILITIES AND HAZARDOUS NUCLEAR MATERIALS AT NEARBY INSTALLATIONS MEANS THAT ANY PROPOSED INCREASE IN AIR ACTIVITY IN THE VICINITY WILL NEED TO BE VERY CAREFULLY CONSIDERED. YOU ARE AWARE OF THE OPERATING LIMITS ALREADY IMPOSED BY LOCAL PROHIBITED ZONES. FURTHERMORE GREENHAM COMMON LIES WITHIN AN AREA ALREADY HEAVILY CONGESTED WITH CIVIL AND MILITARY AIR TRAFFIC, AND COORDINATION OF PROCEDURES WITH TRAFFIC PATTERNS WITHIN THE LONDON TERMINAL AREA AND OTHER ADJACENT AIRFIELDS IS ESSENTIAL. NEARBY ARE LOW FLYING ROUTES AND AREAS. ARE YOU THEREFORE ABLE TO LET US HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT THE AIRCRAFT, ITS BEHAVIOUR, OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND ROUTING, AND FLIGHT SAFETY RECORD TO ENABLE US BETTER TO JUDGE THE IMPACT ON THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS OF THE KIND OF FLYING TO BE UNDERTAKEN THERE?

(7) FOURTHLY WE SHOULD BE PLEASED TO HAVE INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING:

(A) IS IT POSSIBLE TO REFINE THE NUMBER OF US MILITARY PERSONNEL INVOLVED; SOURCES REFER TO "LESS THAN 1500" OR TO "APPROXIMATELY 1300". WITH 2000 DEPENDENTS COULD YOU SAY APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY HOUSING UNITS OFF-BASE WOULD BE REQUIRED?

(B) WHAT SCALE OF BUILDING IS ENVISAGED ON THE BASE? IN HIS STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, MR. MCNAIR-WILSON SPOKE ABOUT $50M.

(C) HOW MANY NEW CIVILIAN JOBS WOULD BE CREATED ON THE BASE?

(D) COULD YOUPROVIDEUS WITH A "NOISE FOOTPRINT" TOGETHER WITH DETAILS OF THE PERFORMANCE AND NOISE CHARACTERISTICS OF KC135 AIRCRAFT ON TAKE-OFF AND LANDING AND WHILE IN CIRCUIT TOGETHER WITH DETAILS OF PROPOSED FLIGHT PATHS OVER SURROUNDING AREAS?

(E) CAN WE TAKE IT THAT THERE IS NO QUESTION OF

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ADDITIONAL LAND PURCHASE EITHER NOW OR IN THE FUTURE?

(8) I AM AFRAID THAT THIS ADDS UP TO A SIZEABLE TASK, BUT YOU WILL APPRECIATE THE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES FACING HMG OVER YOUR APPLICATION. FURTHER MORE WE ARE USUALLY ABLE TO CONDUCT OUR CONSIDERATION OF SUCH US APPLICATIONS BEHIND A VEIL OF CONFIDENTIALITY. IN THIS CASE, THE MPS, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND PUBLIC ARE ALREADY WELL AWARE OF YOUR AIMS, ALBEIT SOME HAVE BEEN EXAGGERATED. IT IS THEREFORE MORE THAN USUALLY IMPORTANT TO HAVE AVAILABLE ALL THE INFORMATION WE NEED TO PROCESS THE CASE. IT MIGHT ALSO BE HELPFUL TO BOTH PARTIES TO HAVE REPLIES TO OUR QUESTIONS AS THEY BECOME AVAILABLE RATHER THAN WAIT UNTIL YOU HAVE ALL THE INFORMATION READY TO PASS TO US. AS YOU KNOW WE ARE LIKELY TO UNDERGO PUBLIC EXAMINATION ON THE FUTURE OF GREENHAM COMMON WHEN THE WEST BERKSHIRE STRUCTURE PLAN IS CONSIDERED AT A LOCAL INQUIRY. WE UNDERSTAND THE DATE WILL BE 5 APRIL. THERE IS TO BE A PRELIMINARY MEETING WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT EARLY NEXT MONTH AND WE WOULD PARTICULARLY APPRECIATE AN EARLY RESPONSE TO MY PARAGRAPH 7 FOR THIS PURPOSE.

. END TEXT. BREWSTER

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Case Number: n/a
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TAGS: MPOL, MILI, UK, NATO
To: STATE DOD
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